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## Testimony: Appropriations Committee

February 16, 2016

Good evening Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Melissa Marshall. I live in West Hartford and I am testifying in my capacity as former Executive Director of the Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC) a Center for Independent Living in Norwich. Shelagh McClure, the Council Director, has submitted testimony on behalf of the Council I'm here today to urge you to restore funding for Centers for Independent Living in the budget.

For those were not familiar with the Centers for Independent Living, they are nonprofit organizations whose Board of Directors must be comprised of a majority of people disabilities and they typically employ people with disabilities as staff. The funding that has been cut enables the centers to provide four core services of independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy and information and referral. No one lives in a Center; rather Centers provide the support and facilitates empowerment which allows people with all types of disabilities to live independently in the community. Funding also supports the Centers in preventing unwanted and unnecessary institutionalization and enable people who don't want to live in institutions to remain in the community.

As partners in the Money Follows the Person demonstration, Centers for Independent Living transitioned 233 individuals out of nursing facilities, SAVING the State over \$10.3M in 2015 almost 20 times the annual state funding for the Centers. In addition, Centers prevented 422 individuals from entering nursing facilities saving an estimated minimum of \$1 million. Many others will be talking

about this savings in greater detail as the hearing progresses. In addition to the financial savings, the quality of people lives was immeasurable improved.

A number of you serve on the I/DD Caucus and are all too familiar with the struggles that people with intellectual disabilities and their families encounter on a daily basis. Centers can and do serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as people with physical, sensory, psychiatric disabilities, brain injury and autism. The proposed budget cut is yet another instance when people with disabilities and families are being told that they will not receive vital support that they need to be independent. We have been told to “be creative” and to “do more with less”. Centers enable people with disabilities to do just that. The Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance urges you not to slam another door shut in the face of people who are striving to be independent, to be productive citizens and to protect their civil rights.

Centers support people in living independently. Centers support people in becoming employed. Centers support people with disabilities in being tax payers. Centers produce a return on investment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.